

**Northern Kentucky University**  
**Proposal: Making Our Campus More Adult-Learner Friendly**  
**Submitted June 1, 2009**

Following are five proposed projects to be completed by Northern Kentucky University in 2009-10 as part of the Kentucky Adult Learner Initiative. These projects were identified through the year-long analysis of adult friendliness at NKU by the Adult Learner Initiative task team. The team will guide the implementation of the five priority projects throughout the year.

**1. Adult Learner Scholarships**

Adults are scrambling for resources to fund their education. Little institutional money is earmarked for adult learners. In past years, they relied heavily on employer reimbursement plans and federal loans. However, many employers have curtailed reimbursement plans and many adults are reticent to take out loans in the current economy. NKU has found that even nominal scholarships of \$250 make a difference in adult learner motivation to return to school.

The task team proposes allocating \$12,500 of the 2009-10 funding to adult scholarships. The team will serve as the scholarship committee and will give preference to adults who are approaching graduation. Scholarships will be awarded each term in the new academic year.

**Objective: To encourage persistence toward degree completion by providing funding for students nearing graduation.** Fifty \$250 scholarships will be awarded in the academic year. Recipient academic progress will be tracked, monitored and reported at the end of each term.

This funding will be in addition to the Project Graduate Scholarships of \$250 per term that are currently funded through the NKU Budget Office and carry-forward monies available from the 2008-09 KALI grant.

**2. Expanding majors available through PACE and online programs**

The Adult Learner Inventory (ALI) conducted last year proved that adults like the flexibility afforded by the Program for Adult-Centered Education (PACE) and fully online programs. However, a limited number of majors are available.

**Objective: To identify two additional majors that can be delivered in online and/or PACE and to work with the appropriate academic departments to prepare the programs for enrollment in 2010-11.**

This will be accomplished by listening to adult learners through focus groups and other formal and informal channels. Employers will be polled to identify high-need degrees. In addition, national forecasts will be scanned to further highlight degrees needed for future occupations.

A budget of \$2,500 is proposed to fund focus groups, surveys and other activities geared toward garnering the type of input described above.

3. Revamp the portfolio program.

Once a vibrant program, the portfolio program at NKU has limited appeal due to declining participation by academic departments. Further, the program requires students to complete a portfolio development class as part of the process, and low enrollment has prevented that class from being offered consistently.

The task team believes one problem is a lack of understanding about the rigor inherent in the portfolio process. Faculty and especially department chairs need to be educated about assessment of prior learning and the specific process students experience through the portfolio process.

**Objective: To provide training and education for department chairs and faculty regarding assessment of prior learning through portfolio.** This will be accomplished through a series of onsite trainings to be hosted by the task team. Further, funding will be earmarked to send two interested department chairs (or their faculty designees) to a regional or national conference about portfolio. The task team will entertain applications from interested faculty to select the two individuals most appropriate to receive this funding.

**Objective: To develop the portfolio development course into a fully online format in a “ready anytime” format that will allow adult students to complete the course at their convenience throughout the year.** This course will be developed by December 30, 2009.

A total of \$7,000 will be allocated to this initiative as outlined below.

4. Address transfer policies for military personnel.

NKU awards up to 32 hours for military training. However, these hours come in as elective rather than course-specific credits. As a result, military personnel still face a long road to graduation due to the number of general education and major courses still required.

NKU needs to examine transfer policies. The task team proposes conducting a competitive analysis of state, regional and local institutions to better identify common practices. Further, the number of CLEP tests available must be expanded to include those commonly taken by military personnel. In addition, NKU needs to explore military-sponsored DSST tests and consider administering and accepting these tests.

**Objective: To adopt course-specific transfer policies for military credit.**

**Objective: To expand the number of CLEP tests accepted at NKU.**

**Objective: To examine DSST tests and determine whether or not NKU should accept them.**

As with portfolio, the task team believes much of the hesitancy regarding military experience stems from a lack of understanding about its rigor. With the introduction of the new GI Bill, a plethora of workshops and seminars are available regarding credit for military experience. The task team proposes sending faculty and staff to several trainings. This initiative will be implemented in conjunction with NKU's recently formed Veterans Advocacy Committee.

5. Develop an online career exploration module for adult students.  
Also through the ALI, NKU learned that adults need more help exploring career options and understanding how best to prepare themselves for the jobs of the future. However, career services at NKU are primarily geared for entry-level workers, leaving adults with few resources for assistance.

The task team proposed development of a series of online career exploration modules that can be completed by the adult student. These modules will be tutorial in nature and accessible anywhere, anytime. They will be developed by career professionals and will include a variety of student testimonials meant to motivate adults to persist in their educational goals.

**Objective: To develop a series of online career exploration modules targeted to the adult students.** Modules will be available by December 30, 2009 and will include opportunities for students to evaluate the modules and provide feedback regarding their usefulness. Numbers of students completing the modules will be tracked and reported on quarterly.

### **Financial Information:**

Following is the proposed budget for each initiative detailed above.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>FY 09-10 Proposed Budget</b>
Adult learner scholarship (50 @ \$250/each)	\$12,500.00
Student focus groups, employer surveys and other research to identify majors appropriate for flexible formats	\$ 2,500.00
Training and education – prior learning assessment (portfolio development)	\$ 5,000.00
Development of portfolio class into online format	\$ 2,000.00
Training and education – credit for military experience including CLEP and DSST testing options	\$ 5,000.00
Development of online career explorations modules	\$ 2,000.00
Miscellaneous (printing, publicity, postage, etc.)	\$ 1,000.00
<b>Total Budget – 2009-10 Adult Learner Initiatives</b>	<b>\$30,000.00</b>